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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 001872

SIPDIS

FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/16/2012

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SUBJECT: STATUS OF FOOD RELIEF IN ZIMBABWE

REF: A. HARARE 1802

[1](#)B. HARARE 1812

[1](#)C. HARARE 1820

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) The Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ), WFP, U.S, UK, EU and other NGOs are undertaking separate food relief efforts in Zimbabwe. The targets of the WFP, U.S., UK, EU and NGO programs are the most vulnerable Zimbabweans. We have heard numerous reports that the GOZ distributes food to Zanu-PF supporters, but there is no evidence that political affiliation has influenced who gets U.S. food. A range of impediments, however, have hindered distribution of U.S. food through the WFP program, including false press reports, politicians' media statements implying they are involved in the NGO distribution process, and limited NGO capacity. An independent monitoring system is required to investigate and prevent abuse, and we are working actively with other donors in Harare to develop such a mechanism. USAID/DCHA/OFDA coordination with OCHA and provision of funds for monitoring are also critical. Observers agree that even with planned increases in the coming months, demand for food will outstrip supply of food assistance. End Summary.

Who's Distributing Food Here?

[1](#)2. (U) The GOZ, WFP, U.S, UK, EU and other NGOs are undertaking separate food relief efforts in various areas of the country. Though we are unclear on all of the precise sites, the GOZ is selling, exchanging for work, and handing out maize meal through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) selectively in areas where it appears that Zanu-PF has done well in recent elections. The U.S. is currently contributing about 40 percent of the WFP program which contracts four NGOs for distribution: Care International (southeastern provinces), Christian Care (north and eastern provinces), World Vision (southwest, southeast, and northeast provinces) and the Zimbabwean NGO ORAP (southern and western provinces). The U.S. also has a bilateral program with World Vision (see areas above). The UK and EU have their own bilateral programs. In addition, there are other NGOs operating independently of these efforts: Save the Children Fund UK (western provinces), Oxfam (central provinces), Plan (eastern provinces), and HelpAge (central provinces).

Distribution Process and Criteria

[1](#)3. (U) The fundamental criterion of all non-GOZ efforts is targeting the most vulnerable Zimbabweans. NGOs work with local government officials (councilors etc.) traditional leaders, church groups, and local NGOs to identify recipients and reach a consensus list of beneficiaries. Some basic criteria are: lack of livestock, lack of income, single mothers, non-working parents, orphans, HIV affected, elderly, chronically ill, and disabled. Once a list is developed, it is discussed at a town meeting where any local resident can comment, or appeal his case for inclusion. Stocks may run out before all eligible people are served, and the identification process is subject to error or abuse, but it is community based, and incorporates checks and balances that allow for reconsideration and appeal.

U.S. Food

[1](#)4. (C) There have been numerous reports in the local press, and some Embassy election observers witnessed first hand the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) distributing food primarily or entirely to ruling party supporters. However, there is no evidence that political affiliation has influenced who gets U.S.-donated food. There is, furthermore, no indication that so-called war vets have taken over feeding sites, or padlocked any warehouses with U.S. food, or hijacked trucks carrying U.S. food. However, food assistance is becoming a significant element in a rhetorical tug-of-war between Zanu-PF and the MDC, which hampers the ability of contracting NGOs to distribute U.S. food, and occasionally has delayed distribution.

Political Rhetoric and the Impact on Food Distribution

15. (U) On August 6, Poloff met with Reverend Matonga, Director of Christian Care in Zimbabwe, to discuss a recent press report that war vets had skewed the list of Christian Care food recipients in Muzarabani (Mashonaland Central province) in favor of Zanu-PF supporters. Christian Care distributed 48 metric tons of WFP food in Muzarabani in July.

According to Matonga, the story was a complete fabrication by the MDC, and he has been trying unsuccessfully to get a meeting with MDC officials to set the record straight. Christian Care has not had any difficulties with Zanu-PF supporters since February 2000 when two of its employees were beaten by war vets. The organization subsequently received an apology from the provincial governor.

16. (U) Political statements from officials of both political parties--although ZANU-PF is the worst culprit--illustrate the charged environment in which food distribution is taking place, and how politicians from both sides have fueled allegations of politicization. In May, for instance, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and MP Abednico Ncube reportedly told villagers in Gwanda that "everyone will receive food". World Vision halted their Gwanda program, and was forced to re-explain the beneficiary criteria to excluded angry villagers who thought they would receive food. Ncube subsequently corrected that statement publicly, but told villagers in Matabeleland in July that maize "will be available only to those who dump the opposition and work with ZANU-PF", and the party would "start feeding its children before turning to those of the MDC". On July 20, ZANU-PF MP for Beitbridge, Kembo Mohadi, warned NGOs distributing food in Gwanda that they would have to follow government directives, and their equipment would soon be taken over by local GOZ officials. In an August 2 BBC article, Didymus Mutasa, ZANU-PF Secretary for External Relations, complained that Western influence comes along with donor food distribution, and suggested that any food aid should be distributed through government mechanisms. See Ref. B for further official objections to NGO food distribution.

17. (U) On August 6, under the headline, "Food Aid Prolongs Nation's Suffering", the independent "Financial Gazette" commented that food aid is perpetuating and prolonging deeper suffering by giving Zimbabweans a false sense of food security when instead they should be confronting the political causes of their starvation.

Straining NGO Resources

18. (C) Rudo Kwaramba, World Vision Country Director, has been occupied with responding to questions from the international community, setting the record straight in the local media with interviews and press briefings, and persuading offending politicians to correct their statements, all of which takes time away from actually feeding the hungry. WFP Director Kevin Farrell also complained that checking every instance of abuse is consuming a significant percentage of their time.

Monitoring Mechanism

19. (C) USAID, the UK's DFID, EU and WFP agree that an independent monitoring mechanism is required to investigate and prevent abuse. We understand that USAID/DCHA/OFDA in Washington is pursuing, with the UN, the establishment of a permanent OCHA presence here to handle this task. The USAID Mission here is working with other donors to develop a strategy and mechanism for establishing such an independent monitoring mechanism, in conjunction with local NGOs. FOSENET, a consortium of local NGOs, has already initiated a preliminary aid monitoring network with funding from several donors.

Ramp-Up - Bottlenecks?

110. (U) In conjunction with the new expanded consolidated appeals, the WFP is in the process of expanding its program coverage and partner NGOs. WFP's plan is to increase its food distribution from its current level of about 10,000 metric tons per month, to 50,000 metric tons per month by December 2002. The national consumption is 135,000 to 150,000 metric tons per month. According to Kevin Farrell, WFP is working to designate more NGOs and registering them with the GOZ, and ramping-up the capacities of the NGOs currently registered. Farrell believes currently registered NGOs are reluctant to increase their staffs and logistics in advance of the food actually arriving in country.

111. (U) Under the enhanced WFP program, World Vision is supposed to increase distribution to 12,186 metric tons a month by December 2002. However, World Vision finds the terms of the WFP program difficult. According to Kwaramba, they receive a fixed fee of US\$24,000 per month, and a variable fee US\$39.00 per ton distributed. Submitting invoices to get reimbursed for the variable fee takes time, thus they are cash strapped at the same moment when they are

trying to scale-up their operations. Also, their agreement with WFP was to distribute 2,600 metric tons of food for the month of July. But WFP only delivered 2,100 metric tons. Thus World Vision laid out the logistical costs to distribute 2,600 metric tons--but will only be paid for their actual distribution of 2,100. Additionally, WFP is proposing terms for the enhanced program that would be even worse from the World Vision perspective: an advance with most of the payment by variable fee, and no fixed fee. World Vision finds the terms of the USAID bilateral program much easier--USAID hands over the food and the money to distribute it at the outset.

Severity of the Crisis

12. (C) Jean-Claude Mukadi, World Vision Relief Manager, thinks that even the planned increase in supply of relief food will not meet demand. That is, if WFP were able to ramp-up to 50,000 metric tons a month by the end of the year, and the GMB distributes what they have in stock and in the pipeline, and the smaller NGO and other programs continue or are increased as planned--still there will not be enough. The already high numbers of people suffering from malnutrition are increasing daily, in one month, people will be much worse Mukadi cautioned. (Note: We do not yet have concrete malnutrition rates. End Note.) Ref. A also predicts a shortfall.

Comment

13. (C) The good news is that the barriers to GMO food donations are coming down, (Ref. C), and the beneficiary identification process and criteria are mostly transparent. In addition, outright handing over of food along political lines seems confined to the GOZ's own distribution programs. An independent monitoring agency would undoubtedly contribute to more equitable distribution, and we will continue to press this issue actively. However, the crisis is worsening, putting strain on NGOs to increase capacity. At the same time responding to increased political rhetoric is also straining limited NGO resources, necessarily taking time away from actual food distribution. End Comment.

SULLIVAN